

Hon. R. S. Thornton

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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A D D R E S S

IN THE LEGISLATURE, ON
JANUARY 24th,

1918

BY

HON. R. S. THORNTON
MINISTER OF EDUCATION



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WINNIPEG
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EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS IN 1917

Notwithstanding the strenuous times through which we are passing, perhaps because of these, the people generally are realizing more than ever the importance of education and this is evidenced by the fact that during the past year the number of new school buildings outside of the cities has exceeded that of any previous year. Old buildings are being replaced by modern up-to-date structures. Consolidation has taken place at different points, the initiative in all cases having been taken by the residents themselves.

There have been several splendidly equipped schools built in various parts of the Province at Stockton, Eden, Plumas, Wellwood, Foxwarren, Ethelbert, McCreary and Teulon, each marking a step forward in capacity and equipment. In this connection it would be fair to mention the most recent eight room consolidated school. The consolidation comprises eighty-two sections of land. The school is built in the village of Foxwarren, which has a population of two hundred and thirty. The school is thoroughly modern in every respect, meeting all the requirements of the Department and more. It is a solid brick building of fire-proof construction, equipped with steam heat, electric light, a special system of ventilation, a well of water with pressure system of distribution, and a sewage system with septic tank. In the basement are large rooms for play, manual training and domestic science, while on the top floor two of the rooms, with cloak room space, are left in one making a splendid hall which can accommodate five hundred people. The building is situated in a plot of ten acres of land which will be used for demonstration and recreation purposes.

Teachers' Requirements.

On March first of this year certain regulations were passed by the Advisory Board requiring all teachers in the province to take the oath or declaration of allegiance, and providing

that all future students in training at the normal schools should take the same declaration before receiving their diplomas. No permanent license will hereafter be granted to any teacher who is not a British subject by birth or naturalization. Applicants who are not British subjects but who present evidence of sufficient training and standing may be granted a permit to teach from time to time, but in no case for any period exceeding six months at one time. It is further provided that all these applicants must take a special declaration of allegiance before receiving a permit. In the case of those whose native tongue is not English they are submitted to an oral examination to determine their proficiency in the English language. These are not temporary regulations, but form a permanent part of the regulations for teachers.

School Attendance.

The Act respecting school attendance was passed at the session of the Legislature in March 1916. A supervisor was appointed and some weeks necessarily spent in organization. The Act went into force on July 1st. 1916 so that on June 30th, 1917, we had the first complete year's experience of the operations of the Act. The enrolment for 1917 throughout the Province was 106,588, an increase over the previous year of 2,792. The average attendance was 69,209, being an increase of 3,648. The percentage of attendance to enrolment in 1916 was 64.1 and in 1917—64.9, an increase in the average attendance of .8 per cent.

In considering this question so far as it affects rural districts it is necessary to remember that the state of the roads, weather, and other conditions affect attendance more than in the cities. During the last year school attendance was much lowered by the fact that many of the children were employed on the farms during the spring and fall owing to the scarcity of farm labor. The Department made regulations allowing the withdrawal of the older children for a period not to exceed six weeks in the spring and six weeks in the fall to work on the farms and it is estimated by the supervisor that about 10,000 children were temporarily withdrawn from the schools under this provision.

Of more importance than the actual statistics is the fact that the people are generally being educated to the requirements of the law. The chief weapons of the attendance officers are

persuasion and persistence. Out of the 8,269 cases of irregular attendance which were dealt with, twenty-six were taken before the magistrate, a conviction being obtained in all cases.

In the school districts having three or more class rooms a local attendance officer is employed and the average attendance in these districts ranges from 82 to 86 per cent.

In the City of Winnipeg the reports show that out of 22,245 children between the ages of seven and fourteen, there were only 261 not enrolled in some school. These 261 cases were individually investigated and satisfactory reasons for non-attendance at school given in all but fifty-two and these children were duly registered. During the year 7,314 cases of irregular attendance were dealt with and in the majority of these cases a visit and explanation on the part of the attendance officer brought satisfactory results. By firmness and persuasion most of these cases were corrected and only in fifteen was it necessary to resort to the courts, conviction being obtained in all cases.

Judge McKerchar of the Juvenile Court reports that the number of truancy cases brought before that court was five as compared with one hundred and seventy-three (173) during the preceding year. He says further that "truancy is usually the first step to delinquency and the checking of truancy has no doubt contributed in no small degree to reducing the number of delinquency cases from 350 during the year 1916 to 325 during the year 1917." These results indicate the adequacy of the provisions of the attendance law and the efficient and thorough administration by the officers of the Winnipeg Public School Board.

School Libraries.

At the session of 1916 provision was made for increasing the annual legislative grant by twenty dollars per teacher. One half of this amount was intended to compensate the school districts for the expense of enforcing the regulations regarding school attendance. The other half was designated by the Act to be used for library purposes. A circular letter was sent to each school enquiring as to the names and number of books in the library connected therewith. The replies showed that out of 1495 one room schools, 340, or about one in four, had no books whatever other than the class text books. The great majority were quite inadequately supplied, and in only 182 schools, or one in eight was the library adequate as to quantity and quality.

In all schools outside of the incorporated towns and cities the grant is administered directly by the Department. A list of books is submitted to the school boards from which, in consultation with the teachers, they can make a selection. When the lists are complete the books are procured at contract prices and distributed to the school districts. There were many delays incident to the establishing of a new project, and also due to the general upsetting of commercial conditions, but the first annual distribution of libraries was made last Fall. The requisitions are in hand for this year's allotment and while the amount in each room is not large, it does not preclude the trustee boards from spending larger amounts where they so desire, and insures that every school shall have a library steadily increasing in volume from year to year.

Special School Organizer.

The work of the special school organizer has progressed steadily throughout the year. It will be necessary to recall the conditions which required the establishing of this branch of the Department. In the session of 1916 the attention of the Legislature was called to a serious condition of overcrowding in a large number of schools in districts where the people were of non-English origin, chiefly Ruthenians, Poles, and others from continental Europe.

The district in which these conditions specially obtained is north and east from the city of Winnipeg and within easy reach of a city motor car. This territory was one of the earliest settlements in the history of the province. During recent years the earlier settlers moved out and their places were taken by the newcomers; but whereas the early settlers farmed from a quarter section upward, the newcomers settled on allotments of eighty acres downward, in some cases a family living on only five acres of land. In one school district one section of land was held by sixteen families each having a legal sub-division of forty acres; the school population on this section of land was thirty-nine, enough in itself for a one room school. In another school district there were thirteen families on one section of land. These school districts averaged in size from nine to fourteen sections. About one hundred districts showed a school population of fifty and upwards. Many of them showed about a hundred and in one or two extreme cases as high as one hundred and sixty children for

a one room school. The only schools available were the old small schools with a capacity of from twenty to thirty pupils and these had fifty, sixty and in one case one hundred and five children present at one time.

Besides this overcrowded condition there were several school districts which had been organized for some years but in which no schools had been built although there were children in plenty to go to school. There were also many settlements where no school districts had been organized.

The plan of meeting these conditions has already been explained. New schools had to be built. The Government lends the money to these districts at cost. The rate at first was five and later six per cent. The terms of repayment of the principal are graded, being very light in the earlier years, and a special grant of one hundred dollars per teacher may be given from year to year until the districts can carry their burden easily. The schools are built under the direction of the special school organizer. In many cases they were built by the existing school boards with the co-operation and supervision of the school organizer, but this system of dual control has not proved satisfactory so in all cases where these building operations are now carried on the districts are placed under his care as official trustee. He began his work on October 1, 1915 and last year after fourteen months' operations we reported that his work had been instrumental in erecting and putting in operation forty-four (44) new school buildings. The work was actively prosecuted during the present year and in these twelve months sixty-eight (68) more schools were erected and are now all occupied. Many of these schools in the new districts are not easily reached by reason of bad roads and much time was saved by getting the material hauled during the winter months.

School Buildings.

These school buildings are not temporary buildings, but up-to-date one room schools competing with the best one room schools in the Province. They are built of frame on a concrete foundation. The general plan is twenty-four by thirty-six (24 x 36) with an entrance porch. This size accommodates comfortably fifty children with sufficient space for a teacher's room, cloak room, and ante-room. The buildings are not plastered as that would be impossible under present labor conditions, but they are warmly built and lined inside with beaver board or plaster board and are comfortably

heated. Each school is painted, fully equipped with blackboards, maps, globe, book-cases, water filter, and usually a drinking cup for each family, sometimes one for each child.

In the twenty-six months since beginning operations there have been built altogether one hundred and twelve (112) rooms providing accommodation for more than five thousand (5000) children. Of these ninety-eight (98) are entirely new schools, and fourteen (14) replace old rooms. There are now actually enrolled at these schools about forty-two hundred (4200) children of whom about thirty-four hundred (3400) had previously no schools whatever and the remainder had been crowded into little old buildings getting a very scanty education.

With the erection of the ninety-eight (98) additional schools we have pretty well met the overcrowded conditions first referred to. The sections of the Province in which these schools have been built lie east of the Red River and Lake Winnipeg, and between the lakes and north of Dauphin. The most significant group of all is within easy reach of this city by motor car. A glance at the map will show a triangle of territory the base being the Red River from Winnipeg to Selkirk, and the sides being the main line of the C. P. R. and the Molson cut off. In this triangle of land about thirty miles long and about twelve wide at its widest point, thirteen additional school rooms have been erected in these two years and thirteen additional teachers are now being employed.

Teachers' Residences.

The problem of securing teachers for these schools presented considerable difficulty owing to lack of suitable living and boarding accommodation. Last year we tried the plan of building teachers' residences, eight of them being built in the first year. The idea took so well that there have been built this year in connection with these schools thirty seven (37) teachers residences making forty-five (45) to date.

The first residences built were somewhat inadequate in size and accommodation. They were tentative experiments as we were not sure of the working out of the plan, but we have now arrived at a size which will afford comfortable quarters for the teacher. These are one story buildings on a concrete foundation, the usual size to be built in future being twenty by twenty-two (20 x 22). This gives a kitchen, living room, and bedroom with a porch screened in to serve as a sleeping porch in summer and glazed to serve as a store room and shed in winter. Where the teachers' residence is to serve a two room school the size built will be twenty-two by twenty-two.

(22x22) giving two bedrooms and the screened veranda will be in addition.

Before leaving the question of actual building I would like to point out that the erection during the year of sixty-eight (68) schools and thirty-seven (37) residences, or one hundred and five (105) buildings over such a widespread area was in itself no small accomplishment.

Teachers.

The teachers employed in these schools are all trained teachers, the majority of them being bright, conscientious women, as most of our Manitoba teachers are. Nearly all have regular certificates and most of them have had previous experience. Not a few of them are former teachers who have taken up teaching again for various reasons, such as the case of one lady whose husband is a wounded prisoner of war in Germany. Although some of them may not have the present day academic standing, they have the experience of life which makes their work particularly valuable under these conditions. With a teachers' residence there is no longer any unusual difficulty in getting satisfactory teachers. Many are being attracted by the nature of the work and the fact of having the sympathetic backing of the trustee board eliminates many difficulties. In every case the teacher has a companion, usually a sister, mother or aunt or some other near relative. Several widows have their children with them. In some cases the teacher has a grown-up girl from the settlement to live with her and thus teaches her domestic science and the art of living in a practical way.

Teaching Results.

The results are encouraging beyond expectation. The little folks themselves are just as bright teachable children as any others, generally with a keen desire to learn and it is no uncommon thing to find a teacher starting in with thirty or thirty-five pupils of assorted ages who have not heard one word of English or had a day's education. In three months they will have established a fair working vocabulary, with a knowledge of names, words and qualifications. Manual training benches are installed in eight of these schools. A goodly number of teachers give regular instruction in knitting and sewing and in twelve schools hot tea, hot soup, or some other form of simple lunch is prepared at noon. This has a valuable bearing on the health and morale of the children. The noon hour when the hot lunch brings the teacher and children

together in an informal fashion, is very often the most valuable educational hour of the day. The children usually attend regularly except when there is a special demand to help in the fields. The record for average attendance in any school in the Province is held by one of these schools. District number 1646 had an average attendance for the month of June, 1916 of 46.5 and for the month of December 46.6 out of an enrolment of 47, although some children had three and three and a half miles to travel to school.

Evening classes are being held in connection with about one-third of these schools on two or three evenings a week. They are attended by adults varying in number from ten to thirty and in age from sixteen to sixty-two, desirous of being taught in the English language.

The aim of the Department has been to secure the co-operation of the people themselves and while there are many differences to be adjusted, the people are usually satisfied with the results once the school is put in operation.

Special Training and Inspection.

Last year we employed a special inspector to give extra attention to the installing of teachers in these schools and getting the schools satisfactorily under way, and this arrangement has been continued.

In July of this year we arranged a special course of two weeks' duration conducted by Mr. Sisler and his assistants at Strathcona school for the special training of these teachers. Thirty-four (34) teachers attended and nearly all of them are now teaching in these non-English schools. This course will be repeated and enlarged this summer and the teachers taking up this work will thus receive special training to enable them to secure the best and quickest results under these new conditions.

Illustrations.

That we may appreciate more fully the work being done and the spirit in which the teachers in these districts are grappling with their problems, let me give you a few notes made on a visit of inspection to some of these districts. School district number 1070 has a three room school in a district composed of about eight or nine sections of land, the third room having been added in the fall of 1915. Outside the

school is a garden plot with the fall flowers in full bloom. Each window is neatly curtained and has flowers on the sill. The principal here is an enthusiast on domestic science. Hot lunch is served and the girls are taught sewing, canning and preserving. At the annual teachers' convention held in Winnipeg at Easter this school took first place with an exhibit of handiwork.

School district number 1039 has now three rooms. Its area is ten and a half sections of land. Two years ago it had an old dilapidated school room with seventy-three (73) children enrolled. The old building was repaired and a new one built a mile and a half away. One year later there were sixty-one (61) children in the new room and still seventy-three (73) in the old room. A second room has been added to the new building and a teachers' residence is nearing completion. The two rooms have been taught by two Canadian girls who are staying for the second year and doing splendid work.

School district number 1858 is a new school district formed from some unoccupied territory and portions of adjoining districts. A new school and a teacher's residence have been built in a three acre clearing in the scrub. The teacher has a second class certificate and four years teaching experience. Her sister lives with her. The buildings have been scarcely finished and school is only getting under way, but during the three weeks since arriving on the scene the teacher has called on every family in the district. She has a small piano and on Sunday afternoons when many of the people have returned the call there is music and conversation. The teacher is planning evening classes at the request of the grown-ups so that they may learn the language of the country.

At each point of call one receives a new access of inspiration as one witnesses the enthusiasm of these teachers working in isolated places and under difficult conditions.

It is only necessary to state the facts related here in mere outline to realize how important a work is going on in these districts from the point of view of educating the children, developing the community and building the nation. In nearly all these schools singing is taught and among the first songs learned are the National Anthem and O Canada. In one school recently opened the teacher hung the flag over the board and the first English words learned in that school were "The Union Jack."

What has been accomplished so far has been made possible by the repeal of the bi-lingual clause of the School Act. Had that clause remained in the statutes our efforts would have been blocked at almost every turn. The first difficulties have been overcome and we are gradually getting a band of capable, conscientious and devoted teachers to work in these schools.

Education and National Development.

It is fair to say that not only in the special work directly managed from the Department, but in the general activities throughout the province, this has been the most progressive year educationally in the history of the province. It is well that we should appreciate properly the work of the teacher not only in the development of the talents and characters of individuals, but in the work of moulding and directing national tendencies, ideals and characteristics.

The conflict in the great world war is a conflict between opposing ideas and ideals. When in 1870 Germany started out on her quest for world domination one of her first tasks was to educate the minds of her people in that direction. During the years since that date in home and playground, in kindergarten and elementary school, in high school and university, the doctrine has been continually taught—Germany above everything, Germany above everything. “The Day” came when Germany found herself fully equipped with trained soldiers, reserves of munitions and food and all the requisites of war. The spirit of the people was prepared and they marched forth to dominate and subdue. It is that spirit which the rest of the world is fighting against today.

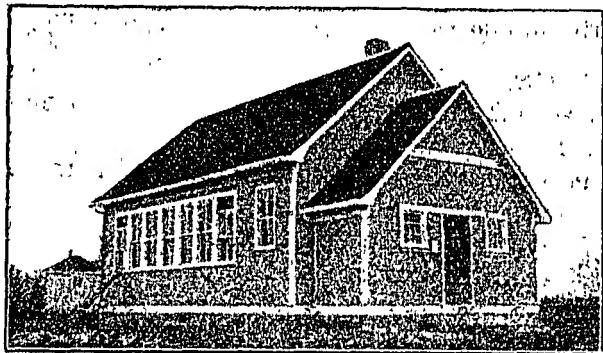
Over there in France in the area from which the Germans have been driven back the people are rehabilitating their ruined homes. They have sown the grass and planted the flowers on the resting places of the brave men who have died for them, and in their ruined villages away up near the front lines, almost within sound of the roar of the guns, they have opened their schools so that they might preserve in the minds of their children the spirit of France.

In the city of Rheims during these years of war the schools have been kept going in the cellars of that city and the work of education has been carried on in the midst of accumulating ruins and under the constant threat of German guns. Sometimes the schools have been hit by the German shells, but no

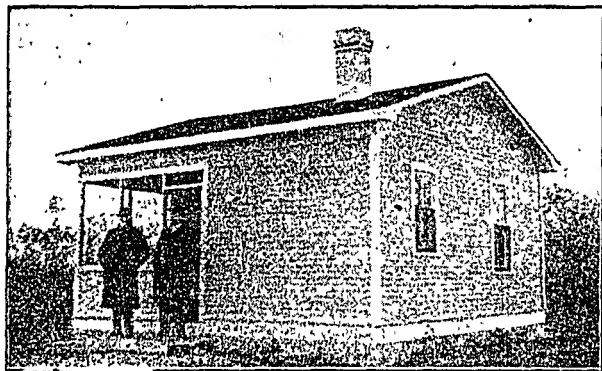
child or teacher has been hurt. The teachers were specially mentioned in a government order of the day and the head teacher received the high distinction of the Legion of Honor. That is their estimate of the value of education to the nation. What would it avail to have sacrificed so many lives and so much treasure to preserve the spirit of France if that spirit should be lost through failure to nurture the seeds thereof in the minds of the children.

So we in Canada have to foster the spirit of Canada, that spirit which we inherited from the motherland to be moulded and developed here. The task which takes our teachers to their work is the same in essence, although manifested in different ways, as that which takes our lads across the sea to fight for our liberties. The one is the call to nurture and develop, the other to preserve and protect the life and the spirit of Canada.





HAZEL GLEN SCHOOL



HAZEL GLEN SCHOOL RESIDENCE